

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Restoration Coordination Team
Conference call 04-25-07, 3:00pm CST

Participants:

Bobbi Reed (GMF)
Kristopher Benson (NOAA)
Carl Ferraro (ADCNR)
Quenton Dokken (GMF)
Heidi Recksiek (NOAA)
Kendal Keyes (TPWD)
Drew Puffer (EPA)
Randy Runnels (FDEP)
Woody Woodrow (TDPW)

Columbus Brown (USFWS)
Dugan Sabins (LDEQ)
Chris David (NOAA)
Greg Ducote (LADNR)
Dawn LaVoie (USGS)
Larry Parson (USACE)
John Bowie (EPA)
Marie Burns (USACE)

1.) Updates on upcoming TX meeting

BR: Sent along agendas for TX and Mexico days at the next workshop. If you haven't RSVP'd yet, do so as soon as possible.

BR: There will be at least 5 representatives from Mexico at this point.

QD: Very strong agenda coming from Mexico. There is a high-ranking official from Gov. Herrera's office planning on being there, so be aware that there is a higher-level politico there than we are used to.

WW: Will Alfonso be there?

BR: He isn't currently scheduled.

QD: All of the speakers speak very good English, and are high up in their respective agencies. There is some enthusiasm for using this meeting as a catalyst for creating a national restoration program for Mexico.

QD: Who is coming was completely left up to Mexico, so there may be other people you have had contact with, but I feel very good that there are the right people coming.

KB: Any ideas about how they will fill the empty space in the afternoon?

QD: Want to get w/ TX and MX people to see how they want to fill it in.

KB: Maybe there should be some sort of discussion about opportunities to cooperate internationally during the afternoon session?

CB: FWS might be able to contribute to such a discussion w/ international grant programs and other programs.

QD: I'll get back w/ the Mexico folks and report back at some point. I don't want to commit to filling in that time slot without their approval.

KB: We still need to flesh out the session on implementation of the Action Plan on the last day. We are pulling together up-to-date responses from previous meetings/workshops/white papers about R1-4, 5, & 6 as well as the responses to the questionnaires the GMF is circulating.

KB: State responses to the questionnaire are critical to the discussion.

QD: Want to emphasize that point. State folks know beyond all others in the group the specific detail needed to answer those questions, so the more you can contribute, the better it will inform the process.

KB: And we'll be able to build on it at the meeting.

WW: We have confirmation on all of the speakers for the TX session.

2.) July Alliance-wide meeting

HR: We'll get \$10K from CSC for travel funding for the July meeting and the recommendations for members of that group are coming along, at least one from each state.

CF: Anyone from AL EMA? Debbie Perry is who I work with.

QD: Land-use planning people as well?

HR: I think planners are critical to the resiliency issue and we have several suggestions for people with that type of background.

KB: Drew, do you want to talk about travel funding from EPA for the original RRCT members?

DP: We can provide travel for one person, but that person must be a speaker or presenter.

KB: Randy won't need travel support, and we've got one team member covered by this commitment to support travel for a speaker. So, travel costs for the remaining three or four team members (depending on how many come from each state) will still need to be covered. It may be possible to rework the travel budget of the EPA grant to the Gulf of Mexico Foundation to cover these three or four people, as long as the break-out sessions accomplish some grant deliverable. This means aside from dealing with R-2 actions, one break-out session should be dedicated to either action R1-4 or R1-5. We'll have covered action R1-6 at the TX workshop.

QD: I'll do whatever I can under the budget, but the award hasn't even been signed yet. We can't spend what we don't have.

KB: In any case, we'll be to work it out and we'll try to spread out the agenda between R1 items and R2 items. Does anyone have any suggestions for how to proceed?

QD: Drew, Kris, Heidi, and I should sit down and put a draft together for people to take a cut at.

2.) August/September FL meeting

BR: We need to lock in the dates during the week of August 20 for the FL meeting before we get going with the hotels and other logistics.

RR: My secretary has mentioned this need, and I've been waiting to hear the final word about whether the July & August meetings would be separated. It sounds like they will be.

KB: How do people feel about the final two focused action item discussions (R1-4 & R1-5)? We have discussed combining those two issues; we will have the opportunity to discuss one in July, so will we need another in August?

MB: Lynn M and I have been talking about those topics quite a bit. Some streamlining efforts in FL have been happening and we would be happy to present these and the FL person involved would be available to speak.

RR: I'd like to get different perspectives on the topic if we do it, as I know there are some concerns.

KB: So, we'll tentatively talk about R1-4 in July and R1-5 in August.

RR: One thing I want to highlight is the hydrological modeling work we are doing in FL. So, we'll be ready to talk about the role of science in restoration

KB: We may be able to get both actions in the July meeting if necessary, so that the implementation session in FL can be devoted to science, or we could split the FL session between streamlining and science. We'll try to nail it down before the July meeting. We have some time.

RR: Some of the science discussion can be had during the presentations inventorying FL-specific issues, so if the implementation session needs to cover streamlining it can.

CB: I think we need to keep our discussion focused. The differences between habitat creation, restoration, and enhancement are significant in the grants process, where funding authorities limit the uses money can be put toward and agencies must show accountability for meeting goals in terms of specific acreages. Large percentages of these grants must go towards "turning the dirt"; i.e., restoration on the ground.

KB: We will be talking about these grants issues at the TX meeting. Recommendations captured to date already indicate that there should be changes made in the way federal granting agencies do business, and that may mean specific changes to legislation, or it may just be changes in the ways the agencies implement the legislation. We'll get into the specifics at the workshop.

WW: CB, you are preaching to the converted.

RR: There is a good argument for doing some long-term monitoring & good modeling before turning dirt, to ensure that projects do more good than harm.

4.) Other notes

DP: Bobbi, what are the hotel reservations under?

BR: Gulf Foundation or Gulf Alliance, RRCT meeting

Meeting adjourned at ~4:09pm CDT.